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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that good teaching is an intrinsic talent rather than a learned skill, and that the teaching act is an artistic expression. Thus, the thrust of research in teacher education becomes a fruitless exercise. Efforts in professional preparation should be directed toward the discovery and revelation of the talented rather than adopting the position that individuals can be molded into good teachers. Present research efforts appear to be based on the manipulation of subjects and environments in order to produce "desired" responses. Therefore, all that follows when such practices are adopted is suspect. (Author/JS)

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"Notes On The Disestablishment of Pedagogy or Who Needs Research In Teacher Education Anyway?"**

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There are several ways, I suppose, one may go about discrediting teacher education research. We can point to sloppy techniques, lack of sophistication, the seeming obsession with minutiae and the fact that it may be condoning and even encouraging unethical behavior.

In a recent issue of Psychology Today, Donald Warwick points out that 'outright lies and misrepresentations abound in social science research. From 1948 to 1963 the number of studies using deception in personality and social psychology (I think we would agree that most teacher education research falls within these categories.) rose from 18 to 38 per cent.' (p.38)

I expect to get into the morality of this whole enterprise later but, for the present, I wish to point out that any one of these factors is sufficient to make us pause and consider the value and effectiveness of the teacher education research business anyway.

But, I prefer not to rest my case on the basis of these factors What I want to do and what I would ask you to do is examine the nature of this teacher education process I've become concerned about examining the nature of teacher education recently because I keep having this dream or fantasy. It's beginning to occur more and more frequently. The dream goes something like this.

The building on our campus which houses the College of Education is Arps Hall. My fantasy is that one day I arrive on campus and discover that Arps Hall has disappeared and all the people who are employed there have vanished also. I look around to find them but they are gone without a trace. When I inquire, no one

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seems to know what I am talking about. People claim to have never heard of Arps Hall and don't know what a College of Education is. In desperation I turn to the University catalog. The section that used to appear between Economics and Electrical Engineering is gone. There are no more courses in methods of, foundations of, curriculum problems in, educational psychology, organization and administration of, principles of; all is gone. And, the frightening thing is that no one seems to miss us and one one seems concerned. All the business and academic affairs seem to be going on as usual.

As I interpret this fantasy, there seems to be only two possibilities that could have caused this. The first is that the College of Education--that is, the professional educators--have done the job so well that they have completed their task; there is no longer any need for them. That have been so successful they are now superfluous. The second possibility is that the Colleges of Education and professional educators were always superfluous, never necessary, and so no one missed them when they were gone. I must confess that if I were forced to choose one of these two possibilities it is the second that is much more likely to be true

I want to extend this fantasy even further. Suppose that all of the Arps Halls in all of the colleges and universities in this country disappeared? This leads us to the tough, hard-nosed, pragmatic question that William James liked to ask, "What difference would it make?" Would it really make a difference if we were gone? I know we would like to think so but would it? What's pedagogy all about anyway? What are we all about?

Now there are some underlying assumptions present (some very subtle assumptions to be sure) which we have come to accept when we think of teacher education. We have incorporated them into our way of thinking so well that we

have become blinded, literally blinded, to alternate ways of seeing and doing things. These are the assumptions that I wish to call to your attention and I've outlined them in the following three ways.

1. In the first place there seems to be an assumption about the nature of a human being that permeates this whole state of affairs. That is, that a person is manipulable, capable of being directed, molded, shaped or to put it more politely "guided" into becoming what we deem it best for him or her to become. In the "guided," seemingly less structured programs, there is a sloppy kind of inefficient conditioning going on, whereas in the behavior modifying, competency based programs the conditioned responses seem to come about in a quicker, more direct manner (at least on a short term basis). Now I do not deny that people are capable of being manipulated. There is more than enough evidence indicating the universality of that phenomenon. What I do object to is the subtle, discriminating way in which we make a value judgment on this practice. There is no clearer example of this than in the way we use words. For example when the Chinese use conditioning techniques we call it "brainwashing" and, when our own educators use it, we call it behavior modification. This is done in all innocence and even with a sense of satisfaction and the ultimate tragedy is that we educators become so enamored when we see the quick, clean, efficient results of behavior modification (which often come to us, by the way, in the guise of performance or competency based instruction programs) that we fail to recognize its basic hypothesis of the nature of a person.

2. This brings me to the second assumption we make about teacher education which manifests itself in our concept of what a teacher or the act of teaching is. Inherent in our view of the teaching-learning process is an

acceptance of the role of teacher as an agent of change. That is to say that there is a presumption in our thinking about the educational enterprise--that it is the teacher's job to bring about change, to cause change and to act as a director toward specific goals or objectives. The emphasis inevitably makes the process a one way or one directional affair. The attitude leads to a separation of teacher and student. I choose not to conceive of the educational endeavor in this light. For this reason I would eliminate the teacher-learning, teacher-pupil distinction. In fact, I propose we eliminate the words teacher and teaching entirely. We are all learners.

3. The third assumption is that teacher education and teaching and learning is a scientific activity. I refuse to accept this. The teaching act or role is a way of behaving that is neither amenable to generalizations nor scientific reduction. The teaching enterprise probably exemplifies more of an artistic piece of expression than a scientific one. The same may be said also of the learning process which involves what may be called an "insightful" experience; a leap that is based just as much upon faith as it is upon evidence. Leaps of this nature, I am convinced, are not scientifically explicable. To continue to search for answers to the questions of teaching and learning along the "scientific and empirically oriented lines" which our experimental pedagogical mechanics seem bent on doing constitutes an enormous waste of time, effort and resources. What I am suggesting is that teaching-learning is a highly individualized enterprise capable of being understood, not in a generalized way, but in the continually changing series of particular experiences which occur at distinct and on all too infrequent occasions. Learning indeed occurs but it is a self induced process.

It's a private occurrence--distinct, unique and somewhat different every time. It's different because all the factors are never exactly the same. It adheres to something that may be called a pedagogical principle of indeterminacy. The only way I know to come to grips with it is to give yourself up to its infinite elusiveness and be prepared for its continual succession of surprises. Rejoice in its occurrences but don't become smug. You are not a discoverer of secrets so much as you are a witness to a happening often experienced through the blink of an eye. Teaching is an artistic expression of an insightful experience and learning may be termed as an insightful experience of an artistic expression. The process is dialog between self and other; the goal is knowledge and understanding of self.

There is this presence of self that we must come to recognize that is engaged in ongoing activity. In this sensing, throbbing, pulsating presence is the continual process of acting and being acted on. It also operates on several levels of awareness at the same time. These awarenesses are constantly in a state of flux. As a result literally dozens of behavioral choices may be made within a minutes time. But, it is important to remember that the essential nature of the act is one of <u>choice</u> among alternatives. Any attempt to deny this choice making capability constitutes an imposition and, to a degree, a violation of the self. Now the self is a remarkably resilient entity capable of absorbing enormous punishment and innumerable violations but there appears to be limits to what individual selves are capable of withstanding and still retain some modicum of integrity. When the self becomes so battered that it is irreparably damaged, this constitutes the ultimate obscenity.

Is there an alternative to this ultimate commitment to scientism. Lyall

Watson in his absorbing book, The Romeo Error, states, "I feel compelled to try to find someway of reconciling scientific investigation and mystic revelation. I am beginning to appreciate that there are limits to the scientific method and that it is impossible to observe some things without changing them substantially in the process. To observe is to modify and to describe and to understand is to alter radically." (p. 11) Atomic physicists now recognize the absurdity of the claim that existence rests on measurability. Yet behavioral scientists, among whom I include all our teacher education researchers, still persist in accepting this as a guiding principle.

I have another principle I would recommend for your consideration. "Accept what is in front of you without wanting the situation to be other than than it is. Study the natural order of things and work with it rather than against it, for to try to change what is only sets up resistance....If we watch carefully, we will see that work proceeds more quickly and easily if we stop 'trying,' if we stop putting in so much extra effort, if we stop looking for results. In the clarity of a still and open mind, truth will be reflected. We will come to appreciate the original meaning of the word 'understand,' which means 'to stand under.' We serve whatever or whoever stands before us..." (Tao Te Ching, Gin Fu-Feng and Jane English (tr.), New York: Vintage Books, 1972.)

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